

Dear EPA Staff Overseeing Tidewater Virginia DEQ Air Monitoring Grant (Project Grant 96388301),

We want to inform you that we have sent the following letter to the Virginia DEQ in regard to the Tidewater Air Monitoring Project--

On behalf of the communities that are directly impacted by coal and coal dust, I hereby formally request that the DEQ release a detailed plan of community engagement concerning the Tidewater Air Monitoring Project. Our communities anticipate such an engagement plan to include, at a minimum, a timeline and identification of the specific action(s) the DEQ is planning to engage the community in a survey process around air monitoring site locations. It is further expected that this plan will include scheduled community meetings and other opportunities for public input.

One issue that is of particular concern to the impacted community is the DEQ's plan to use "Purple" Air Monitors. Please advise on why the DEQ is opting to use grant funds for Purple Air Monitors. Are these monitors serving as substitutes for other equipment? Are the monitors capable of assessing coal dust impacts, and if so, will their locations be sufficient to accomplish that goal, as well as the purposes of the EPA grant?

The impacted community has also generated a list of questions that will help inform the community and allow future engagement with the community to be focused. As such, please provide direct responses, or materials that respond to, the following questions:

1. Are there any documents relating to the project, such as technical plans for the monitoring and community outreach plans, that you can provide to us?
Will there be an opportunity for the community to comment on the DEQ's plan overall before it's finalized? When will that happen, and how long will the comment period be? (Or, if not, why not?)
2. What kind of air monitors are being used (what specs)?
3. Who are the stakeholders and how would they be identified?
4. How will data be collected and who would be collecting it?
5. Will there be contractors involved? If so, what is the process for contractor selection?
Where are the air monitors being placed (how was that placement determined)?
How will DEQ be working with the department of health?
6. What are the goals or outcomes from the study and the grant?

7. What has the DEQ done to reduce the levels of these pollutants in the Hopewell community?
8. If the study reveals harmful levels of pollutants that exceed regulatory thresholds, what does the DEQ see as the primary means by which it could address that harm? Enforcement actions? More stringent permits? If so, for whom? Are there measures that DEQ is aware of and believes would be effective but which DEQ believes it lacks authority to implement? How will the DEQ formally document and release to the public their outreach and harm response plans?
9. Will DEQ contact/consult with neighbors impacted by coal dust to monitor locations that have historically and routinely been "dusted?" If not, how will DEQ know where to place monitors?
10. Will DEQ be using technology that will allow it to distinguish between possible sources of pollutants?
11. Will there be simultaneous video-taping or photography when an air monitor is "triggered" by pollutants?
12. Will DEQ's final report include information identifying the socio-economic and demographics of the areas where monitoring occurred? If not, why not?
13. Are there any stipulations on the grant coming from the EPA? What are they?
14. Will air monitoring be done in any additional communities besides Lamberts Point and the Southeast Newport News communities? Residents have mentioned West Ghent as a relevant monitoring site.
15. How much of the grant will be spent on community outreach? Can a breakdown of what those outreach activities will be and their estimated cost be made public? How will in-person and/or door-to-door outreach be integrated into these outreach practices?
16. How will the placement of the monitors be determined? How will the community be engaged in the determination of where the air monitors will be placed?

Thank you,

Kimberly Williams, Resident of Lamberts Point, New Virginia Majority Member

Robin van Tine, Ph.D, Sierra Club VA Environmental Justice Chair, Newport News Resident

Carl Poole, Resident of Norfolk, New Virginia Majority Member

Ann Creasy, Norfolk Resident, Sierra Club Virginia Chapter Organizer

Monét Johnson, Norfolk Resident, New Virginia Majority Organizer

